



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 21 May 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
21 MAY 1968

1. France

The tide has not turned yet. Strikes continue to mushroom all over the country. The Paris police are now demanding immediate pay raises and openly warning that their patience is wearing thin. They have not yet threatened to join the strikers, but it could come to that.

A police strike would immensely complicate the picture for De Gaulle. He would have to bring in the army, which he would regard as a last resort. French military officials have expressed doubt whether even regular troops in the Paris area could be relied on in all circumstances.

At this point, De Gaulle still seems intent on avoiding open confrontation. He knows that use of force to dislodge the protestors would almost surely bring on new violence.

2. Czechoslovakia -
Soviet Union

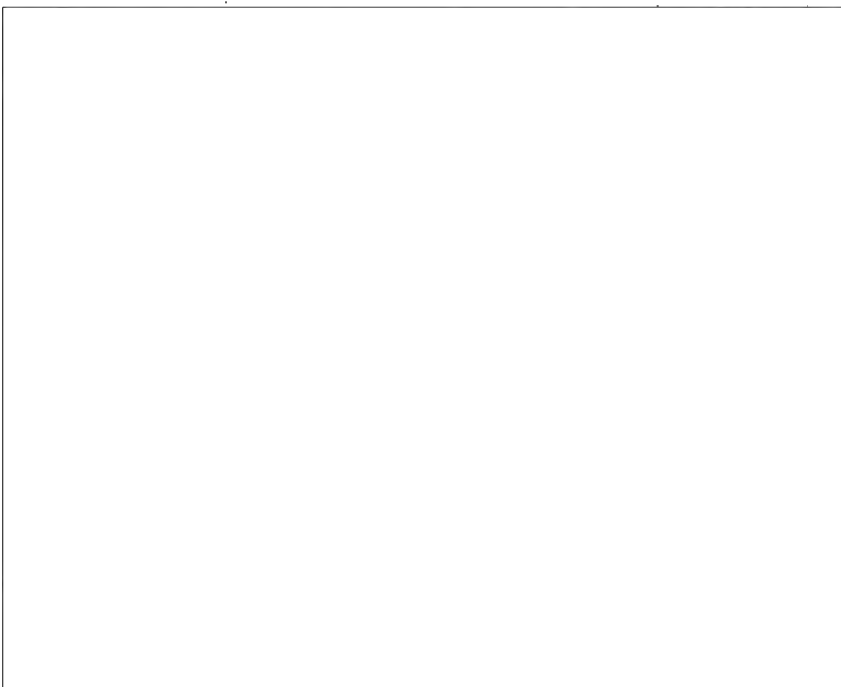
Nothing has happened yet to suggest a break in the Kosygin-Dubcek stalemate. A ranking liberal leader in Prague pointedly declared on Sunday that Czechoslovakia will not retreat in the face of Soviet pressure. He tempered his remark, however, with a warning that the party will not tolerate attacks on its supremacy.

3. United Kingdom

Sterling was under heavy speculative pressure yesterday in all markets. The Bank of England is buying pounds, but it is in bad shape with almost no foreign exchange left. By yesterday, it had spent nearly all of the \$7 billion loaned by other central banks to support sterling during the past year. When these funds run out, sterling will face a de facto devaluation, and that might bring the fall of the Wilson government.

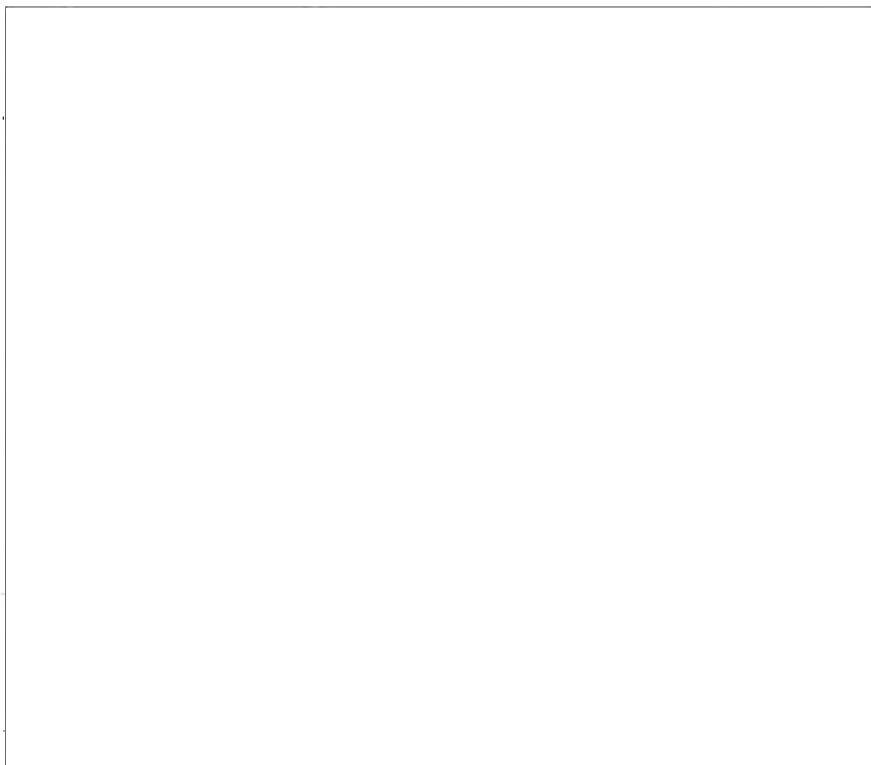
4. West Germany

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5. South Vietnam

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Thieu tells Ambassador Bunker that he and Huong expect to complete formation of the new cabinet in a day or two, and that at least five of the 17 incumbents will be kept on, including two generals.

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6. Australia

Prime Minister Gorton is making his own foreign policy to a much greater extent than Harold Holt ever did. He is relying more and more on his own staff

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The most obvious difference between Gorton and his foreign and defense ministers is his idea that Australia should rely after 1971 on well-armed mobile military units based at home. The ministers contend that Australia should maintain a force in Malaysia.

7. North Korea

The North Koreans are working to expand relations with various Middle East countries. Since the first of the year they have set up diplomatic relations with Iraq and South Yemen and opened trade offices in Lebanon and Kuwait.

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8. Israel

The cabinet meeting yesterday was a rough one for Eshkol. He managed to get endorsement "in principle" for his foreign policy, but Dayan and the other hawks were extremely critical on some points--particularly Eban's "acceptance" of the November Security Council resolution and the transfer of the Jarring talks to New York. In effect, Eshkol and friends have been put on notice that further "concessions" will endanger the coalition government.

9. Soviet Union

With the current ferment in Czechoslovakia, Moscow has additional good reason to keep a sharp eye on its restive intellectuals.

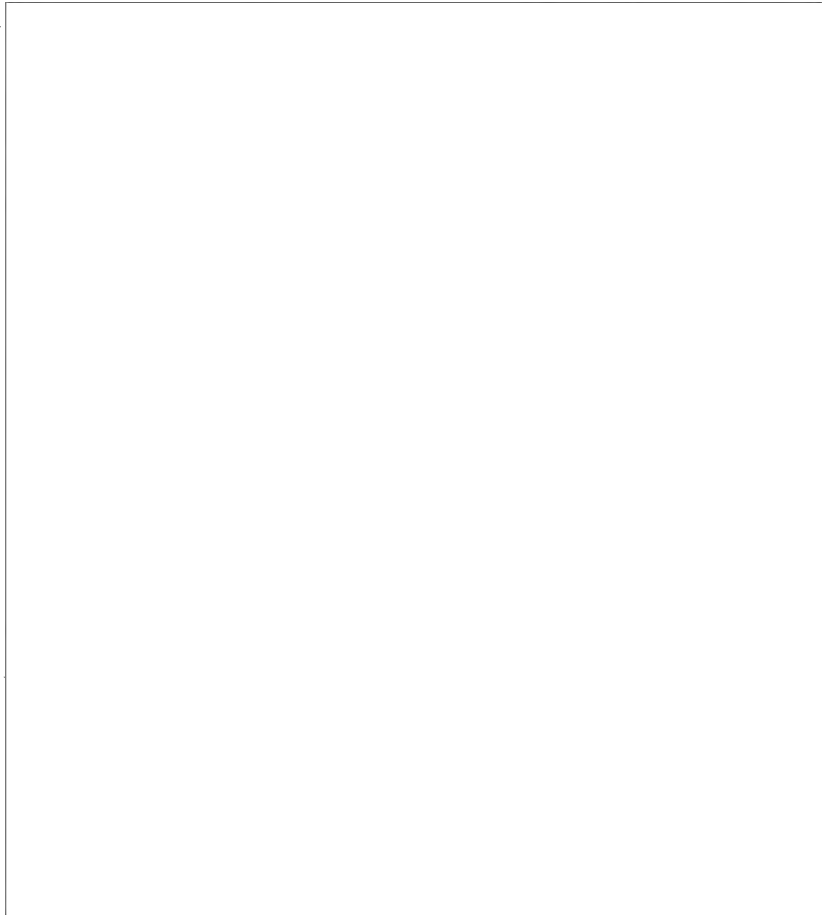
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10. Haiti

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11. Cuba

President Dorticos has been out of public sight for nearly two months. His absence was especially obvious last week when the new Soviet ambassador presented his credentials--to Foreign Minister Roa. We do not know whether Dorticos' problem is physical or political.

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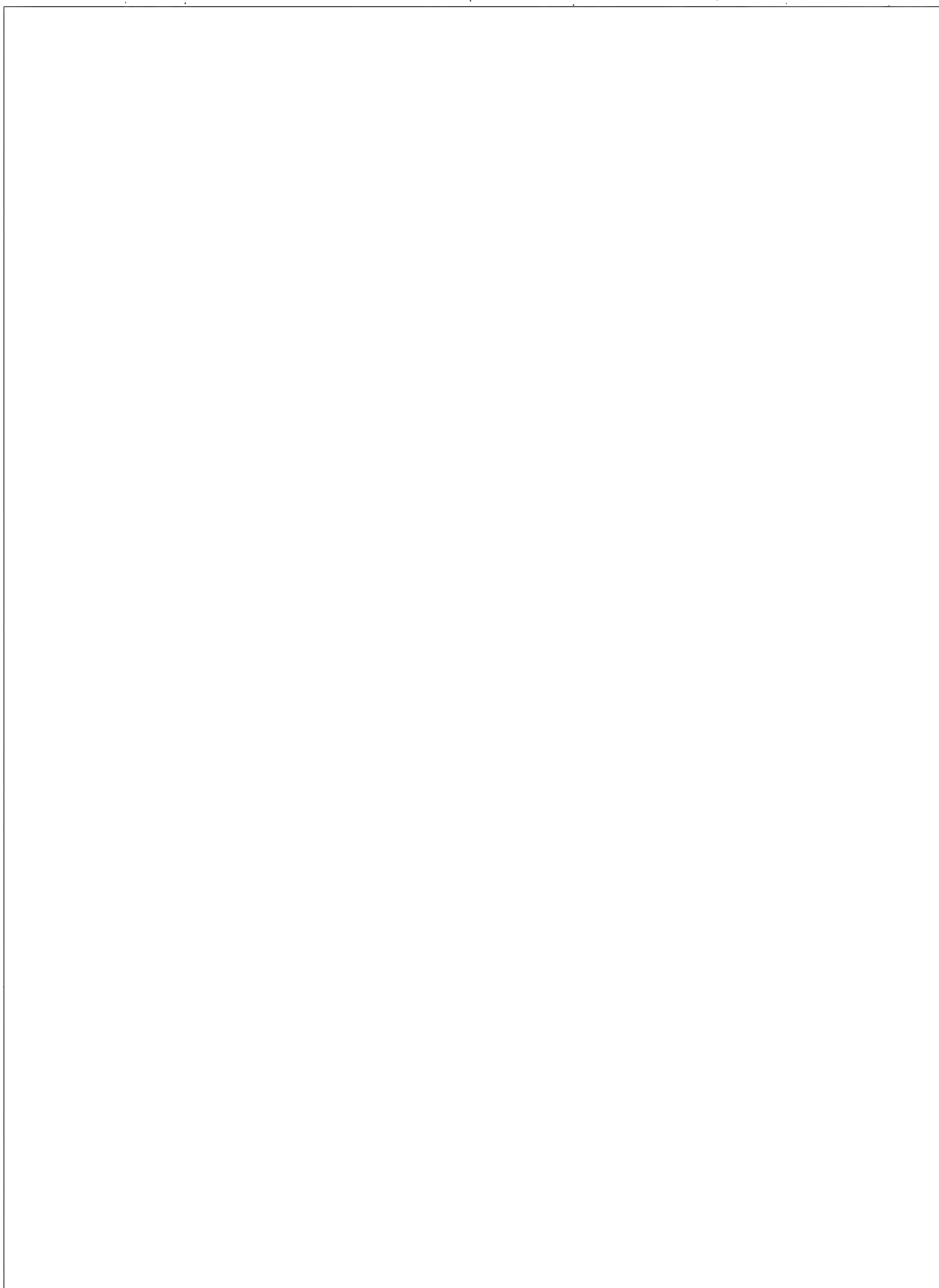
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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

21 May 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi Stresses Southern Victories: Hanoi's latest review of Communist military "successes" in South Vietnam since Tet concluded that, although the allies have failed in their objectives, heavy fighting may still be necessary before a Communist victory is assured. An editorial in the Hanoi daily Nhan Dan, broadcast in English in the International Service on 20 May, listed the usual statistical details which generally accompany the Communist claims of victory in the "general offensive and uprising." It also ridiculed the effort of the US to take measures to prevent further Communist attacks. The editorial zeroed in on the contention that the Saigon government is divided and is suffering serious political, economic, financial, and social difficulties. Contributing to this decline, the editorial alleged, is the growing strength of the Viet Cong as well as the formation of a "bloc of national unity" represented by the new National Alliance. The Alliance was described as "effectively working for the rallying of more people in the fight against the US."

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Civil Defense Preparations Continue: A French news dispatch from Hanoi bears out [redacted] continued defensive preparations. North Vietnamese authorities are said to have begun a "short competition campaign" in the capital to "evacuate the population and increase shelter construction." Hanoi is troubled by the influx of thousands of evacuees who returned following the beginning of bombing restrictions.

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Hanoi Delegate on Paris Talks: Ha Van Lau, deputy head of North Vietnam's negotiating team, in talking to a Japanese newsmen on 18 May, said that Hanoi regards the US entry into talks as acceptance of its demand that the bombings be stopped. Asked what Hanoi would do if the US refused to stop the bombings, Lau said "the talks will continue." He also said that Hanoi believes the US attitude toward negotiations is closely dictated by domestic political considerations and that North Vietnam does not expect serious bargaining until early August under the pressure of the political conventions.

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North Vietnamese Diplomatic Travelers: In its continuing effort to gain the support of neutral governments for its position in the war, Hanoi has for the first time dispatched a representative on a "friendship visit" to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Ngo Minh Loan, the North Vietnamese ambassador to Peking, arrived in Rawalpindi on 17 May for a six-day visit and is receiving considerable government and press attention. Prior to his departure for Kabul, Loan is scheduled to be received by President Ayub and other Pak officials. In statements to the press, Loan has avoided direct comment on the Paris talks. He did state, however, that it is apparent from the US position that there has been no basic change in US policy.

Other traveling Hanoi representatives are being more forthcoming in offering their views of the Paris talks. North Vietnam's Deputy Foreign Minister Hoang Van Loi, who is currently in Syria, was quoted by Damascus radio as saying that the "victories of the South Vietnamese people" have forced the US into the Paris negotiations, and that these victories will make the negotiations brief. Loi also stressed that the US must stop the bombing and added that "we will get what we want either through struggle or through negotiations."

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Nhan Dan Commentary: Like Hanoi's public spokesmen in Paris, North Vietnamese media remain fixed on a full bombing halt as the first condition for any progress in the talks with the United States. A Nhan Dan commentary on 20 May scored the concept of reciprocal military restraint and demanded a complete and "unconditional" bombing cessation. The paper noted that the US had raised many other issues in Paris, "in the hope of diverting public attention" from the bombing question. It said that the Communists were armed with "concrete evidence and valid reasons" on all these issues, which "will be discussed" after a bombing halt.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Hanoi Propaganda Silent on US Elections: Hanoi's propaganda since 3 May has contained no discussion of the US presidential election campaign. There has been no mention of the Indiana or Nebraska primaries. Xuan Thuy's statement at the Paris talks on 13 May took note of US domestic criticism of American policy on Vietnam and named Senator Robert Kennedy as one of the critics, but this passage was not included in the summary of Xuan Thuy's statement disseminated by the Vietnamese News Agency.

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